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### Shining the Spotlight on Diabetes

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# Over the Counter

Rodney G. Richmond, RPh, MS, CGP, FASCP  
Harding University College of Pharmacy



## Shining the Spotlight on Diabetes

By Krystal Frossard and Misty McRae 2016 Doctor of Pharmacy Candidates  
and Rodney Richmond, RPh, MS, CGP, FASCP



**DIABETES HAS REACHED** epidemic proportions in Arkansas, with the prevalence either equaling or exceeding the national average each of the past 15 years, and is now the 6th leading cause of death among all Arkansans. The most recent estimates show that an estimated 372,000 adult Arkansans have diabetes, but of those 124,000 remained undiagnosed and untreated.

Diabetes mellitus is a condition where the body cannot properly process food for use as energy. Our bodies turn the food we eat into sugar, also called glucose, and then turn the sugar into energy using a hormone called insulin. When you have diabetes, your body either does not make enough insulin or it cannot use your insulin correctly. This can cause a buildup of sugar in your blood. Uncontrolled diabetes can cause many different health problems including blindness, lower-extremity amputations, kidney failure, and heart disease. This is why it is very important if you have diabetes to take your medication properly.

Some medications (glimepiride and Prandin™) promote the natural production of more insulin, in order to break down the body's sugars for energy use. Newer medications make the body more sensitive to the insulin produced by the body (Actos®). Normally, the body's cells are like a locked door, and insulin acts as a key to open the door, allowing sugar to come in and give the body energy. But, with diabetes, insulin can no longer unlock the door, so these medications act like the key and unlock it so that sugar can go in like normal. Another

group of medications helps lower sugar levels in the blood (also known as blood glucose). They either block sugar from coming into the body from the digestive system (acarbose), after a person has eaten a meal or snack. Or, if the person has not eaten in a while, the liver will normally create its own sugar to send to the body, but these medications will help stop that (metformin). Lastly, if your body can no longer produce insulin at all, there are several different forms of man-made insulin that can be injected throughout the day to take the place of the body's insulin.

If you have diabetes you need to monitor your blood glucose levels throughout the day to make sure your sugar does not go too high or too low. This may require you to prick your fingers up to several times a day to get a sample of blood that can be placed into a blood glucose monitor that tells you how much sugar is in your blood. Then, based on your levels, you will be able to determine whether you should eat a snack (if your sugar is too low) or seek medical attention (if your sugar is too high).

In order to avoid complications that occur with uncontrolled diabetes, it is important to take your medications properly and follow your physicians' and pharmacists' instructions very closely. Here are some tips from the American Heart Association that might help you remember to take your medications as directed:

- **TAKE** your medicine consistently as directed every day
- **KEEP** a "medicine calendar" and note every time you take your dose
- **ASK** family or friend to help remind you
- **PUT** a reminder note on your medicine cabinet or refrigerator

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If you have questions regarding your medication, please contact your pharmacist. You can also visit the Harding University College of Pharmacy Script Your Future Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/HUCOPSYF](http://www.facebook.com/HUCOPSYF). ♦



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“Be somebody that makes **everybody**  
**feel like somebody.**”

—Anonymous

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